

***TESTIMONY PRESENTED TO THE GOVERNMENT ADMINISTRATION AND
ELECTIONS COMMITTEE
March 16, 2009***

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Testimony Supporting

S. B. No. 839 AN ACT CONCERNING MERGERS AND CONSOLIDATIONS OF VARIOUS STATE AGENCIES.

S. B. No. 840 AN ACT CONCERNING THE ELIMINATION OF THE OFFICE OF CONSUMER COUNSEL, THE OFFICE OF THE HEALTHCARE ADVOCATE, THE OFFICE OF OMBUDSMAN FOR PROPERTY RIGHTS AND CERTAIN LEGISLATIVE COMMISSIONS.

Senator Slossberg, Representative Spallone and distinguished members of the GAE committee, I am Robert Genuario and I am the Secretary of the Office of Policy and Management and I am here to testify in support of a number of bills proposed by the Governor to implement her budget recommendations.

The Governor's budget offers Connecticut taxpayers a more streamlined state government. These proposals, when implemented, will save significant amounts of tax dollars while assuring that core government services and functions continue.

Right now, there are multiple agencies that address the same or similar issues, creating some confusion for the public. Furthermore, there are agencies that have been created simply to watch over other agencies or to advocate for a variety of public policies. This work largely duplicates work performed by the legislature itself, the press and various private advocacy groups.

Additionally, offices that provide support functions to various boards and commissions have been consolidated into larger agencies that have the ability to absorb these functions and thereby achieve efficiencies.

Some of the more notable measures include:

Placing the Department of Higher Education within the State Department of Education as a bureau;

Eliminating the Children's Trust Fund as an agency; (Core prevention grant programs, however, are being consolidated into the Department of Children and Families for administration. Outside review and oversight of the grants, which are currently provided by the Children's Trust Fund Council, will be provided instead by the State Advisory Council on Children and Families.)

Eliminating the Office of the Child Advocate as an agency; (The position of the Child Advocate, however, is continued and will be placed within the Attorney General's Office, with a revised scope of responsibilities.)

Eliminating the Ombudsman of Property Rights;

Transferring advocacy duties from the Office of the Consumer Counsel to the Office of the Attorney General;

Eliminating the Commission on Aging, the Commission on Children, the Permanent Commission on the Status of Women, the Latino and Puerto Rican Affairs Commission, the African-American Affairs Commission, and the Asian Pacific American Affairs Commission

and Eliminating the Office of the Healthcare Advocate. (The Consumer Affairs Division of the Insurance Department performs very similar functions as this office).

Each of these offices and commissions obviously has a constituency and a statutory function. However, these are extraordinary times and we simply cannot afford business as usual. We have to make significant changes in the structure of our state government and get it down to a size we can afford. In this way, we can preserve public resources for the most important core functions and services on which our citizens rely.

Thank you for your consideration. I am happy to answer any questions you may have.